

Honor Court Appointment

Attorney General Hughes Strong On Student Rights

By STEVE WELLER
Mace and Crown Staff Writer

Jim Hughes, new attorney general for the honor court, has a deep respect for the honor code, a passion for efficiency, and an unorthodox view of the functions of an attorney general.

"It is not my job to say they're guilty; I am merely there to gather the facts and to present the facts with as little coloration as possible. I consider my office a service agency, not a policy agency. But it is my responsibility to look out for the rights of the students."

This is an attorney general speaking—a far cry from television's bloodthirsty prosecutors whose position he holds in court, or from "the Gestapo type characters" he has been told occupy his position.

"The honor system protects the students." Teachers have, in the past, meted out punishment for those suspected of lying, stealing, cheating, and failure to report any of the above violations of the honor code.

"The court protects the students; gives them some recourse. If the teacher is fair he should use the court system rather than deciding arbitrarily."

Any of the mentioned offenses occurring on campus or in the dorms are under the jurisdiction of the honor court. Complaints are made to the attorney general by anyone knowing of an offense and willing to be concerned.

For example, a victim of theft at the dorms may file a complaint with the attorney general's office which then investigates.

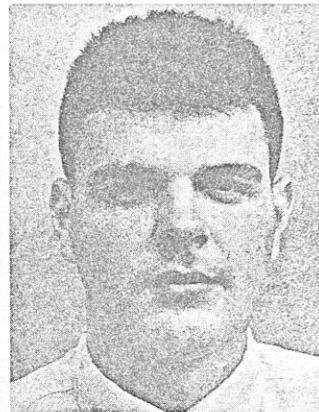
If sufficient evidence is produced to indicate to the grand jury that the offense may be reasonably suspected of a student, that student is brought before the honor court.

A defense counsel represents the suspected student at the trial and all preceding proceedings; the attorney general acts as the prosecutor.

"A person is innocent until proven guilty and I intend to abide by the conclusions of the court. The court decides who is guilty; not me."

Asked if he thought students had respect for the honor code here, Hughes said no. He was impressed by its effectiveness at VPI when he attended there, and his office intends to do all it can to change OD's attitude to a more positive, responsible one.

"Students and faculty can expect efficiency." Efficiency through organization and organization for the defense of rights are Hughes' primary



Hughes

concerns.

"This organization is being set up to prevent any future attorney general from becoming head of a 'secret police.' If everything is nebulous then they can do just about anything. Some red tape is necessary to make sure things are done properly."

Hughes has devised a set of procedures and regulations to govern the operation of his office. In this students are guaranteed the right to counsel while being questioned and excessive or abusive questioning of anyone is forbidden.

All information received will be kept in the strictest confidence with the Registrar's student files, not to be used except in unusual cases.

Investigations are to be carried out discreetly to protect the innocent. The rights

of the student will be explained "to the defendant's satisfaction" before any questioning of him is to be done.

Organizational plans show that the attorney general is directly responsible to the president of the Student Government. The president can cause investigations to be initiated of campus organizations or other items, but the attorney general cannot.

The chief justice of the honor court has sole power over court procedure and legal matters and may direct the attorney general concerning these. The SGA president appoints him with the approval of the student senate.

The attorney general's staff consists of an assistant attorney general who is required to handle complaints, to maintain the security of certain defined information, and to substitute for the attorney general in his absence.

An administrative services officer will provide legal information and devise the forms, which are important as practical procedural devices.

A public relations officer will keep the students informed through weekly releases and a major report every semester. This report will not contain private information on defendants, but will provide general statistics on types of cases and will describe major changes in the court and his office.